

By Jim Wallace

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ALBANY, GA – Military equipment being returned from Iraq and Afghanistan to the Albany Marine Base is big business, and huge corporations are opening offices in Albany to be ready to take part in refurbishing that gear.

That could mean potentially thousands of jobs and millions of dollars in economic growth in the following years.

The sixth largest defense contracting company in the world opened an office in East Albany. L3 Command and Control Systems and Software employs only 28 people at the Albany Marine Base, but that number could potentially grow to hundreds or thousands, as the company hopes to win new contracts for the huge job of refurbishing equipment coming back from the wars in Iraq and Afghanistan.

It was not just any other ribbon cutting as L-3 opened their new office on Rosebrier Avenue, close to the Marine Base's back gate. You may not know the name, but L-3 employs 66,000 people, doing \$14 billion in service and system support for the military worldwide.

L-3 General Manager Steven Zeswitz said, "Growth in the Albany area. Employing local management and local technical staff is a high priority for L-3."

With the recession forcing the Defense Department to count every penny, the military will not be buying new equipment, but instead fixing the gear used in Iraq and Afghanistan to be used again.

"A lot of that work is going to come to Albany, and we can see that logistics work and the integrated support associated with that starting to move to this region. And we would like to be part of that, so that's why we wanted to have a presence down here," Sr. Vice President Kirk

Dye said

Congressman Sanford Bishop said L3 and other defense contractors refurbishing the Marine equipment as quickly as possible is vital to national security. "It is extremely important to our military defense mission, but it's also important to the economic development and industrial base. For support of our military right here in Albany," Bishop said.

Albany leaders know the growth of work at the Albany Marine Base will mean opportunity for local business expansion. "The base does a lot of business and a lot of spin off businesses. And this is just the beginning of something that I think we are going to see more of in the future," Albany Mayor Dr. Willie Adams said.

The contracts to refurbish the Marine equipment will be decided in the coming months, and companies like L3 are here now working win some of those contracts. That could mean hundreds or maybe thousands of jobs by 2012.

The Marine Base announced today that they have unloaded their last container of military equipment from Iraq, and have filled more than 300,000 square feet of warehouse space and three huge parking lots to store that equipment.

They say it's the largest volume of equipment ever at the base. And huge companies are bidding for the millions dollars worth of contracts to refurbish that equipment. Monday General Dynamics is being welcomed, as they open an office in Albany.